

THE LANDWERK NEUENDORF IN THE NOVEMBER POGROMS OF 1938

08/11/2020 HARALD LORDICK [WRITE A COMMENT](#)

Memorial sculpture for Jutta Baumwol — former Landwerk Neuendorf

In the course of the 1930s, Jewish welfare and social policy increasingly found themselves in an extremely exceptional situation – persecution and the loss of livelihood opportunities in Nazi Germany led to the impoverishment of the Jewish population. The gradual exclusion of Jewish youth from school, training and work resulted in the loss of apprenticeships and educational and employment opportunities. One of the greatest challenges was to enable and organize the forced emigration of as many Jews as possible. Restrictive immigration regulations in the target countries made domestic, manual, agricultural and similar qualifications a condition for entry. Jewish welfare organizations reacted by establishing and expanding Jewish institutions, in which relevant knowledge was imparted, and depending on the group membership, the Hachshara was possible in preparation for the Aliyah. This included the teaching material created in 1932 in the context of Jewish socio-political efforts *Landwerk Neuendorf* near Fürstenwalde (Brandenburg). ¹ It offered training opportunities in agriculture, animal husbandry, and gardening, and in trades such as carpentry, locksmithing, wheelwrighting, and home economics. Numerous Jewish training centers fell victim to the *November* pogroms of 1938. A number of the *hachshara* centers and "retraining camps" were brutally attacked, the staff and often also the trainees were taken to concentration camps, facilities were demolished, the sites were temporarily or permanently closed, property was stolen and misused. The Landwerk Neuendorf was also massively affected. Although the attack on Neuendorf has hardly been researched, a reasonably reliable picture of the events can be gained by compiling information from a wide variety of sources. ²

preserved building

The fact that the teaching property was attacked by the SS in November 1938, staff and students were deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Oranienburg and then their immediate emigration to England was forced, is already evident from the statements made by the then director Alexander Moch in his so-called ›Reparation File‹ [3](#) . His brother-in-law Moritz and his son Manfred Gans also remembered these events accordingly. [4](#) And further memories of the events have been handed down.

When in 1978 the *British Association of Jewish Refugees* reported the death of Alexander Moch in a short note in *AJR Information* , [5](#) Fred M. Field, presumably himself a former “trainee” at Landwerk Neuendorf, wrote to the journal: "When in November 1938 practically all trainees were taken to the Oranienburg Concentration Camp, Alex Moch went to London for help and returned with 150 British immigration permits. Armed with these permits, he went to the Commandant of Sachsenhausen and obtained the release of all his boys. He himself was also admitted to this country and established the Farm Institute, Tythrop House, which became the first home for some 200 refugee trainees.« [6](#) An article in the Argentine magazine *La Semana Israelita* in 1960 about the former *Neuendorfer* Max Joseph also contained references to what happened: After that Joseph was “an instructor in this preparation camp until the Gestapo dissolved the *Hachshara* center in 1938 and sent him with many others to the concentration camp [7](#) A similar recollection , which can only refer to November 1938, is handed down by Kurt Gumpel, according to which »... one night an SS troop suddenly appeared who was supposed to take the interns to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Only the courageous intervention of the Jewish head of the institution, Alex Moch, managed to convince the SS leader that the farm could not be run without sufficient workers, so that at least the younger part of the interns, including Kurt, were spared .“ [8](#)

According to the memory of *Holocaust survivor* Eva Gillat, an armed Nazi squad on motorcycles surrounded the manor house and forcibly held the entire workforce there, with the exception of those who looked after the animals on the farm. The residents of the *farm* spent five long days in the hermetically sealed area, under the threat of the occupiers to burn down the farm and the people who were imprisoned there. Added to this was the constant concern and oppressive uncertainty about her relatives 'at home' in these November days. The girls took turns keeping vigil in the dormitories at night for fear of rape. Men who were over 20 years old, about 40 people, were deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. [9](#) Eva Gillat later recalled this drastic experience, which meant for her that she just wanted and had to somehow get out of Germany: »... and that is when, when everybody knew, you had to get out. ... This was the very end.“ [10](#)

Tythrop House – Leonore Goldschmidt and Alexander Moch

Research into the forced flight of the 'Neuendorfer' to England reveals a remarkable connection between Leonore Goldschmidt [11](#) and Alexander Moch in rescuing their respective protégés. "Lore" Goldschmidt founded the *Jewish private school Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt* founded. Under the repression of the Nazi regime, she had been preparing for the emigration of her students and teaching staff for a long time. She hoped to move her school to the United States. She received support from Alvin Johnson. He was Director of the *New School for Social Research* (University, New York City), had the *University in Exile* for European researchers expelled by the Nazis - at which Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas taught - and was committed to farm settlement projects for emigrants.

Goldschmidt, Berlin (film excerpt 1937, USHMM)

After Goldschmidt's trip to New York in the summer of 1938 and numerous discussions, the option of founding an agricultural settlement in North Carolina as a new base for her school had crystallized, encouraged by Alvin Johnson. She was able to win over Alexander Moch's participation in this plan. ¹² However, implementation met with resistance and was delayed. A teacher at the Goldschmidt school had been able to avert the November attack on the school through courageous intervention – a 'movie-worthy miracle' ¹³ – but concerns had now grown even greater, as Goldschmidt wrote in a (very carefully worded) December letter 1938 shows:

“As you know, Mr. Alvin Johnson started a farm in North Carolina to serve as an emigration center for my students. As this immigration is still dragging on for individual boys and girls, while their stay in Germany may be restricted, we have in mind a temporary settlement in England which has progressed so far that the University is an old castle, Tythrop House, Kingsey, Oxfordshire, with surrounding 380 acres of farmland.” ¹⁴

The Tythrop House Agricultural Training Institute jointly planned by Goldschmidt and Moch was also reported in newspapers in December 1938 and January 1939:

»First German Jewish refugee agricultural institution in England to be run on a self-supporting and cooperative basis. 100 young people, aged from 16 to 21, who have been studying under Director Professor L. Moch on a farm outside Berlin will take over Tythrop House and the surrounding farmland of 200 acres. Fifteen hundred acres of farmland have been allocated to Professor Moch and Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt in North Carolina.« ¹⁵

Basically, this was the plan for a *foreign hachshara* in England, more precisely in Kingsey

(Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire), in preparation for emigration to the USA. The agricultural training was probably a condition for accepting the Goldschmidt students in the USA. Leonore Goldschmidt had good contacts in England - the students at her school were able to obtain the English language certificate from the *University of Cambridge* in addition to their Abitur. Goldschmidt's contacts presumably paved the way for Alexander Moch and his *Neuendorfers* to go to England, while his expertise enabled him to run a training farm with him as "agricultural manager" ¹⁶ for the preparation of a settlement in the USA made plausible. Thus *Tythrop House*, as described by Fred M. Field, became a first port of call for the youths from *Neuendorf* who had been released from the »KZ Sachsenhausen«. However, further development did not go as planned. Apparently, *Tythrop House* only briefly served the purpose depicted: in 1940 it was taken over by the British military. Leonore Goldschmidt's students arrived in England on the 'Kindertransport' ¹⁷. She herself emigrated there in the summer of 1939 and rebuilt her school in Folkstone (Kent).

In the course of the 1930s, Landwerk Neuendorf made it possible for numerous, especially young Jews, to emigrate through appropriate professional training. As for many Jewish institutions, the November pogroms of 1938 were also a drastic turning point for the farm: it increasingly lost the characteristics of a self-governing Jewish institution, and living and working there increasingly became compulsory. At the latest since 1941, Gut Neuendorf was a forced labor camp and assembly camp for deportations. From 1942/43 the Jewish residents were deported - many of them to their deaths.

of the Landwerk Neuendorf as a socio-political Jewish project were not discussed at the time.

Commemorative plaque, 1988 — The 1930s and the emergence

A plaque on the former manor house, installed in 1988 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the November pogroms, commemorates the Neuendorf estate.

From 1940-1943 there was an agricultural retraining camp for Jews in this Neuendorf estate. This should make it easier for these sorely tried people to emigrate from the fascist reign of terror to countries willing to take them in.

In fact, from January 1942, after the fascists decided on the “final solution to the Jewish question”, deportations to the extermination camps also took place from here.

With the last transport from Gut Neuendorf in April 1943, a group of children with the Jewish teacher Clara Grunwald were also deported to the gas chambers in Auschwitz to be exterminated.

In honorable memory!

November 9, 1988

50th anniversary of the fascist pogrom night.

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1. See: Landwerk Neuendorf in Brandenburg: Jewish training center, Hachshara camp, NS forced camp - memorial?. In: Kalonymos 20, H. 2, pp. 7-

12. <http://www.steinheim-institut.de/kalonymos/e0e01aec-713c-11e7-9f35-7427eabb5df7.html>. []

2. This article is an abridged and edited version of the section *Das Landwerk Neuendorf in the November pogroms* from: Harald Lordick: *Das Landwerk Neuendorf 1932-1943 - occupational shift, Hachshara, forced labor*. In: Pilarczyk, Ulrike / Ashkenazi, Ofer / Homann, Arne (eds.), *Hachshara und*

- School Museum; Vol. 1). Gifhorn 2020 (online: <https://doi.org/10.24355/dbbs.084-202104201055-0>). []
3. Compensation or compensation files are case files in the context of proceedings, in particular based on the "Federal Law on Compensation for Victims of National Socialist Persecution" (Federal Compensation Law - BEG) of June 29, 1956; for the Moch file see Buchholz, Marlis/Burmil, Shmuel/Enis, Ruth/Füllberg-Stolberg, Claus/Schmid, Hans-Dieter/ Wolschke-Bulmahn, Joachim (eds.): Ahlem – The history of a Jewish horticultural school and its influence on Horticulture and landscape architecture in Germany and Israel. Bremen 2017, p. 229. []
4. See *ibid.* []
5. In memoriam: Mr. Alex Moch. In: AJR Information 32 (1977), H. 12, p. 12 https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1977_december.pdf [Last accessed on: 2020-03-27]. []
6. Field, Fred M. The Late Alex Moch. In: AJR Information 33 (1978), no. 2, p. 12 https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1978_february.pdf [Last accessed on: 2020-03-27]. I owe the reference to Field's letter to the editor and to the Gans family (see below) to Dr. Norbert Fasse, Borken City Archive. []
7. Kenya was our destiny. In: Jewish newsreel. La Semana Israelita, Buenos Aires 21 (1960), Friday 2 December, p. 3. []
8. Lange, Andreas/Jürgen Scheffler (eds.): In the footsteps of the Gumpel family - Biographical testimonies as sources for Jewish history in the 20th century. Bielefeld 2016, p. 90. []
9. See interview with Eva Gillat (née Oppenheim), August 13, 1996 (Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre). I would like to thank Julia Cartarius (History has a Future – Neuendorf im Sande eV) for pointing out this interview and the transcript of the relevant passage. []
10. *Ibid.* []
11. Leonore Goldschmidt (née Zweig, 1897 Gosda/Calau – 1983 London), teacher. []
12. See Thompson, Gertrud: Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt School (1935-1941), p. 39, 2005 http://www.leonoregoldschmidt.com/Lore_storyJune05.pdf [last accessed on: 03/27/2020]. []
13. See the film documentary *Goldschmidt's Children - Survive in Hitler's Shadow*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_P2MMGKTDkI []
14. Leonore Goldschmidt, letter to Raymond Goldschmidt, Washington, December 30, 1938. USHMM, Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt papers. Document/Accession Number: 2005.484. RG Number: RG-10.526 .). []
15. Quoted from Gulland, Diana: Basque and Jewish Refugees at Tythrop House, Kingsey, 1937 to 1940. In: Records of Buckinghamshire 54, 2014, pp. 179-200, here p. 188 <https://www.basquechildren.org/-/docs/articles/col043> [Last accessed on: 03/27/2020]. []
16. Leonore Goldschmidt, letter to Raymond Goldschmidt, Washington, December 30, 1938 (Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt papers, USHMM). []
17. After the November pogroms, the British government allowed the entry of unaccompanied Jewish children up to the age of 17. The prerequisites were godparents or foster families who provided for them or their upkeep. This so-called "Kindertransport" was organized by German Jewish aid organizations and British welfare organizations and saved more than 10,000 mostly Jewish children from Nazi Germany and other European countries. See Hammel, Andrea: Child refugees forever? The history of the Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39. In: Discourse on childhood and youth research/Discourse. Journal of Childhood and Adolescence Research, 5 (2010), H.2, pp. 131-143. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-354619> [last accessed on: 03/27/2020]. []